

REMARKS

Upon entry of this Amendment, claims 1-6, and 8-11 are pending. Claims 12 and 21 are canceled by this Amendment.

The Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for sending a proposed amendment and discussing the same with the undersigned on March 28, 2006 in a telephone interview. In that interview, the Examiner's proposed amendments to claims 1, 5, 9, 12, and 21 were discussed briefly. Additionally, the drawing objection and the 35 U.S.C. section 112 rejections were discussed. The substance of that discussion will be reflected in the comments below.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-6, 8-12, and 21 under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph regarding the inclusion of the language relating to the two components between which axial loading is supported by the thrust bearing, and the recitation that the bearing assembly is distinct from those two components. The Examiner has also objected to the drawings as failing to show the "distinct components." The Applicants respectfully submit that this clarifying amendment merely recites the two components (e.g., a shaft and a housing) between which any thrust bearing is placed to support axial loading. See page 1, lines 6 and 7 of Applicants' specification. One skilled in the art understands that a thrust bearing is inherently intended for use between such components. Therefore, these components need not be shown in the drawings and the section 112 rejection should be withdrawn.

The Examiner has rejected all of the claims either under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Bando (US 4,981,373) or under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bando. The Examiner has proposed amendments to overcome his rejections, and the applicants have incorporated the substance of the proposals with some minor changes. Regarding claim 1, the Examiner proposed eliminating the two instances of the term "engageable" by substituting "engaging" and "engaged". The feature now reciting "a bearing cage retaining the needle rollers and piloting on the lip portion of the first component" accomplishes the proposed elimination of the term "engageable" in a manner different from that proposed by the Examiner, but without changing the claimed function. As for the second instance of the term "engageable," the

Applicants submit that the second race component is not always engaged by the bearing cage to hold the components of the bearing assembly together, but more accurately, the second race component is engageable, as claimed, in certain situations (e.g., when the bearing assembly is not installed, and perhaps when the bearing assembly is installed but not loaded if there is sufficient clearance) as would be understood by those skilled in the art of thrust bearings. Additionally, claim 1 has been amended to recite that the second race component is more ductile and equal to or greater in thickness than the first race component.


The amendments to claims 5, 9, 12, and 21 have been made to conform to the amendments to independent claim 1.

The amendments to claim 1, and the corresponding amendments to claims 5, 9, 12, and 21 overcome the rejections based on Bando, which does not teach or suggest the invention as claimed in independent claim 1. Dependent claims 2-6 and 8-11 depend from claim 1 and are allowable based on the allowability of claim 1, and for other reasons not separately discussed herein.

For the reasons set forth above, entry of this Amendment and allowance of claims 1-6 and 8-11 are respectfully requested.

If the Examiner believes a telephonic interview will advance the prosecution of this matter, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,



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